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Headline news for busy  
church editors

October 1995

Here is the Good News of the United Church of Christ, especially edited for congregational publications, with topical news of the wider church, helpful hints to strengthen members' faith and pride in the denomination and personal testimonies to stir the spirit. Each story is short and complete and can stand alone, ready to drop into the weekly bulletin or the monthly newsletter. The code at the end of some entries refers interested readers to a more comprehensive story in *United Church News*.

**HATS OFF TO TOBY** – Toby was one angry dude, a teenager with an attitude. "When he first arrived here, [at Evangelical Children's Home, a UCC related facility in Alma, Mo.] I didn't think he would make it with us through that first year," remembers executive director Robert Baur. One of Toby's problems was that he didn't trust the staff. It took seven long years to break that wall of hostility, but this year Toby graduated from high school and is college bound. One of those who guided Toby is the Rev. Dan Mott, pastor of Peace UCC, Alma.

"I would not have graduated from school if it were not for pastor Dan and that's a fact," says Toby.

– Thanks to Home News,  
*Evangelical Children's Home*

**NO COMMENT** – The golden arches of McDonalds are better known than the Christian cross, according to a recent survey conducted in six countries, including the United States.

**BETTER TV FOR KIDS?** – The UCC's Office of Communication (OC) has scored a major breakthrough in quality TV fare for children because of an agreement between Westinghouse Electric Company and the Federal Communications Commission. After Westinghouse announced it planned to buy CBS for \$5.4 billion, OC and a coalition of public interest groups filed a petition with the FCC to stop the pending sale. The reason? The sale was not in the public interest. Neither network offered even the minimum three hours a week of educational programming for children recommended by the FCC.

When Westinghouse agreed to expand to the minimum time on the combined network by 1997, the coalition withdrew its petition.

Now the Disney/ABC merger is being negotiated. OC is filing again, but the pressure on Disney not to agree is enormous. Sen. Larry Pressler (R-SD) and Rep. Jack Fields (R-TX) say that the effort to gain better programming for children "could allow public interest groups to unfairly gain the ability to control broadcast programming content."

Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-MA), principal sponsor of the Children's Television Act of 1990, one piece of legislation cited by OC in its filing, urged the five FCC commissioners to "side with children" and require rather than suggest a minimum of three hours per week of educational and informational programming for children as a condition of licensing broadcasters to make free use of the public airwaves.

"Our request of the broadcasters is a modest one," says Chain, "but their determination to flout obligations to the public on this and other matters amounts to flagrant abuse of their public trust. They think no one is watching and that most don't care. I hope this church will show them that we do care about what is happening to children and to our society. We can show them by contacting our Congressional representatives."

**HOW TO BE A FRIENDLY CHURCH** – UCC evangelism and church development executive the Rev. Robert Burt has a great idea to measure how friendly your church is. A friend of his, looking for a new church home, visited 18 UCC churches. The person sat near the front, walked to the rear after the service, back to the front and to the rear again before leaving. The church's friendliness was measured on a point system:

- 10 pts. for a smile from a church member;
- 10 pts. for a greeting from someone close by;
- 100 pts. for an exchange of names;
- 200 pts. for a personal invitation to coffee hour;
- 200 pts. for an invitation to return the following week;
- 1,000 pts. for an introduction to another church member; and
- 2,000 pts. for an invitation to meet the pastor.

The seeker reports that no church scored higher than 200 points and half scored less than 100 points. How would your church score?



**FREE BYTES** – Churches can often acquire a computer free just for the asking, we learn from *Communitas*, the publication of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference. Because technology moves so swiftly, many companies upgrade their computers long before the old ones have worn out. As a tax write off, those companies are often only too glad to donate to churches. The machines may not have the latest bells and whistles, but they can surely benefit a church that thought it could not afford a computer. And there are many church programs available free or at little cost from the UCC's conference resource centers, and as advertised in *Christian Computing*. So you have no excuse not to join the byte and RAM generation.

**TO TURN THE OTHER CHEEK** – What does it take to live the Word? Jane Heckles of the Southern California Conference was deeply moved by the witnessing of Catholics Against Capital Punishment. They offer a pledge, "Declaration of Life," which states: "I hereby declare that should I die as a result of a violent crime, I request that the person or persons found guilty of homicide for my killing not be subject to or put in jeopardy of the death penalty, under any circumstances, no matter how heinous their crime or how much I may have suffered."

Copies of the pledge are sent to family members, friends, the judiciary and law enforcement agencies. For a copy, write to Catholics Against Capital Punishment, Box 3125, Arlington, VA 22203.

*Keeping You Posted* is edited by William C. Winslow and produced monthly by the UCC Office of Communication, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115-1100.

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**ONLY A GIRL CHILD** – The surgeon's heart reached out to the frail little girl. Two-and-a-half years old, she barely weighed 16 pounds. But more searing was the sight of an ugly burn from the little girl's chin to her knee, covering nearly 20 percent of her body. "I just peeled off the dead skin like a gummy, dirty skirt, leaving behind the live baby fat that will take skin grafts," writes Dr. Keith Fleshman, a UCC/Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) missionary in Nepal. The Nepali anesthesiologist, a woman, remarked bitterly, "They waited so long because she is a girl child."

There had been a two-week delay from the time of the burn to treatment. Fleshman continues, "Jesus found girl children to be important. Jesus found outcast and untouchable women to be important. The church must increasingly find that in Christ there is neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free. Once we do, perhaps this stream of half starved, half burned, tragic girl children will disappear. Pray for them."

**COFFEE, TEA OR YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE?** – Worshipers at Clague Road UCC, North Olmsted, Ohio, were startled to read in their Sunday bulletin that they could go to the usual coffee hour after service or have their blood pressure taken. Is this another add-on benefit offered by a competitive suburban church? Not at all, says former pastor, the Rev. Brad Donahue. He hired a parish nurse, who serves as a health educator and facilitator. Parish nursing is a concept whose time has come, pushed in part by the graying of America. The RN at Clague Road, Arlene Holmes, counsels people to stop smoking, lose weight and lower cholesterol levels. She helps members cut through Medicare red tape and, yes, holds the hand of the frail and frightened. "She is a source of joy to us," say Paul and Marge Roehm, older members of the church who occasionally need assistance. "I don't know what we would have done without her."

"People used to ask what we can do for their children," says Donahue. "Now, a person says, 'I'm elderly. What can you do for me?' And if we are serious about ministry, we must meet their needs." Alvyne Rathemayer, parish nurse coordinator at UCC-related Deaconess Health System in St. Louis, agrees. "A lot of churches are looking at reclaiming the church's role in healing and this is a way to do that."

More information? Write to the National Parish Nurse Resource Center, 1800 Dempster Ave., Park Ridge, IL 60068; (708) 696-8773.

**WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE: WE ARE THE DIFFERENCE** –

If there is light in the soul,  
There will be beauty in the person.  
If there is beauty in the person,  
There will be harmony in the house.  
If there is harmony in the house,  
There will be order in the nation.  
If there is order in the nation,  
There will be peace in the world.

– Chinese Proverb  
Thanks to Scarsdale (N.Y.) Congregational UCC